WALTHAMSTOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Code of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers and Students

Introduction:

This policy lays out a set of rules around behaviour for staff, volunteers and students to follow within the school. It acts as a standard that all staff, volunteers and students need to meet to ensure they are aware of what is expected of them.

Aims:

WMS has a legal duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. We also have a legal duty of care towards our Staff, volunteers and students, both paid and unpaid, which requires us to provide guidance on safer working practices. Our code of conduct is set out below providing guidelines on staff behaviour and examples of unacceptable behaviour. All our Staff, volunteers and students must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct at all times whilst being in employment with us. A breach of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action. Please refer to our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure document for further information.

This policy sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all staff at WMS. The principles underlying the guidance aim to encourage staff to achieve the highest possible standards for conduct and minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring. Our staff are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for all our pupils.

All staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, both inside and outside working hours and the work setting.

This code of conduct is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the pupils and the school.

Professional Behaviour and Conduct

- Always remember that while you are caring for other people's children you are in a position of trust. Therefore, your responsibilities to these children and the organisation must be uppermost in your mind at all times.
- Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. WMS expects staff to treat each other, pupils, parents and the wider community with dignity and respect at all times.

- Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to pupils and ensure that the safety and welfare of pupils are accorded the highest priority.
- Staff should show fairness in their treatment of children and avoid behaviours such as embarrassing or humiliating pupils.
- Staff must show tolerance and respect the rights of others and should uphold the fundamental British Values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Staff must have regard for the ethos and values of the school and must not do or say anything which may bring the school or advisory panel into disrepute. Care should be taken by staff to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside school and their responsibilities at school. Staff should act in accordance with the school's policies and procedures at all times.
- Staff, volunteers and students are required to comply with all reasonable management instructions and maintain satisfactory standards of performance at work.
- Staff, volunteers and students are required to co-operate fully with their colleagues, the Principal and any relevant staff from external agencies e.g. the local authority.
- Staff, volunteers and students must not remove any school equipment unless they are authorised by the management to do so.
- Where an employee damages property or equipment belonging to the school, either through misuse or carelessness, or where parts of equipment are lost whilst in the classroom, the school reserves the right to make a deduction from the employee's pay in respect of the damaged property.
- The teaching of any subject in the school precludes the promotion of partisan political views and takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils:

  . while they are in attendance at the school,
  . while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
  . in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Safeguarding and Children's Welfare

- Staff, students and volunteers must not use un-prescribed drugs or be under the influence of alcohol whilst at work.
- Staff, students and volunteers must not use racist, sexist, discriminatory or offensive language.
- Staff, students and volunteers must ensure, whenever possible that there is more than one adult present during activities with children.

- Staff, students and volunteers must ensure that if they are alone with a child that other adults know what activities they are doing and why.
- Physical contact with children must be open and initiated by the child's needs e.g. for a hug when upset or help when toileting. Staff must always prompt children to carry out personal care themselves and if they cannot manage ask if they would like help.
- Staff must give help and support to any new and inexperienced colleague.
- Staff must read and adhere to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures of WMS. This will give the understanding and confidence to recognise when a child may be suffering from harm, how to handle any disclosure and how to report any concerns.
- If staff are unclear about any part of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures, they must seek clarification and advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Wendy Palumbo, or the Principal.
- Staff must familiarise themselves with the school's policies and procedures especially the EYFS Policy, Confidentiality, Whistleblowing, Disciplinary and Grievance, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Risk Assessment and Food Hygiene. If they are unclear about any of these policies and procedures, they must seek clarification and advice from a senior colleague or the Principal/Head of School.
- Staff must ensure they undertake mandatory training to support their role in working with children and ensure that updates to all statutory documents are read and understood. Staff must ensure they are aware of their legal 'duty' in respect to safeguarding concerns and have an awareness and understanding of the reporting processes they are required to follow e.g. having read and understood as a minimum 'Keeping Children Safe in Education document' Part 1 if they work with children.

Behaviour Code

- NEVER use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking or hitting, against a child.
- Treat all children and adults with respect.
- Respect children's and adults' rights.
- Ensure that your behaviour always provides a good example that children can follow.
- Do talk to children about their right to be safe from harm.
- Do listen to children and take every opportunity to raise self-esteem.
- Do work as a team with other members of staff and agree with them what behaviour you expect from the children and be consistent in enforcing it.
- If you have to speak to a child about their behaviour, remember you are challenging 'what they did' not 'who they are'.

Dress Code

WMS recognise that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, all staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and that promotes a professional image.

- Staff, volunteers and students should dress smartly and respectfully. Blue denim jeans and tracksuits may not be worn.
- Staff, volunteers and students should wear trousers, dresses or skirts that fall to or below the knee. Revealing clothing is not permitted and piercings must not be visible.
- High heeled shoes or strapless sandals are not to be worn whilst working.
- Volunteers and students are advised to dress in practical clothing suitable for the daily routine and activities that are provided, many of which are messy. Logos or slogan/wording on staff clothing must be appropriate for a childcare setting.
- Secure wristwatches, wedding and engagement rings (provided that they are not too large) are permitted but other jewellery including bracelets and chains should be removed whilst at work.
- Small hoops or studded earrings are permitted but no large hoops or dangly earrings are allowed. All other piercings should be removed while on school premises.
- Tattoos and body art should be covered while staff are in the premises.

Mobile Phones

- The school allows staff, students or volunteers to bring in personal mobile telephones and devices for their own use.
- Users bringing personal devices into the school must ensure that there is no appropriate or illegal content on the device.
- All staff, students or volunteers must ensure that their mobile telephones/devices are left inside their bag throughout contact time with children and not on their persons. Bags should be placed in a cupboard or lockable room. Mobile phone calls may only be taken at breaks or in staff members', students' or volunteers' own time and not within any classroom or bathroom area/cloakroom where children may be.
- If staff, students or volunteers have a personal emergency they may use the school's phone or make a personal call from their mobile outside of the classroom.
- If staff, students or volunteers need to be contacted during working hours, they are permitted to give the school telephone number as an emergency contact only.
- Staff, students or volunteers must ensure that the principal has their up to date contact information and staff must make their families, children's schools etc. aware of the school telephone number as the emergency work telephone

number. This is the responsibility of the individual staff member, student or volunteer.

- It is the responsibility of all members of staff, students or volunteers to be vigilant and report any concerns regarding the use of mobile phones to the principal. Concerns will be taken seriously, logged and investigated appropriately (see Whistleblowing Policy).

Smoking

- We have a NO SMOKING policy within our premises and all users must abide by this policy. This policy also applies to the use of e-cigarettes, vaping and other substances. If a member of staff wishes to smoke or use an e-cigarette/vape, they must leave the school grounds and move away from the school premises.
- Staff must not smoke or use an e-cigarette/vape whilst working with or supervising children offsite.
- Staff must not consume or be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs or other illegal substances on or near school premises.

Annual Leave

- All annual leave must be taken **out of term time only** as stated in the contract of employment. Individuals with contracts that are 52 weeks must put in writing annual leave requests at least 6 months in advance.

Attendance, Sickness and Absence

- Staff, students or volunteers are required to arrive at work promptly and be ready to start work and sufficiently organised before their contracted times. Staff, volunteers and students are required to remain at work until their contracted time finishes and then only after they have completed tasks such as dismissing the children and tidying their classroom, emptying the rubbish and completing security checks.
- Staff, students and volunteers must obtain authorisation from the principal/Head of School if for any reason they wish to arrive late or leave earlier than their agreed normal start and finishing times.
- It is staff's, students' and volunteers' responsibility to report to the Head of School (Wed-Fri) or the Principal as soon as possible if they are unable to attend work. This must be done by calling them no later than 6:45am.
- For sickness that extends beyond the required period, a medical certificate needs to be provided and continue to be provided if the period of sickness continues. Statutory Sick Pay operates after the appropriate timeframe for absence.
- All appointments that are urgent/necessary during term time must be evidenced with the appointment letter and with 7 working days notice as a minimum where possible.

- The school reserves the right not to pay Staff, volunteers and students in respect of working time lost because of poor timekeeping or appointments that are not evidenced in advance (where possible, fair discretion will be applied by the Principal/Head of School when it is not possible to do so due to an emergency).
- Persistent poor timekeeping may result in disciplinary action.

Health and Safety

- Staff, volunteers and students are required to gain an understanding of the school's health and safety procedures, observe them, and ensure that safety equipment and clothing are always used.
- Staff, volunteers and students must report all accidents, however small, as soon as possible, making an entry in the school's Accident and Incident reporting book.

Relationships with Pupils:

- Staff must maintain professional boundaries with pupils/students appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably. Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. Staff should think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.
- Staff must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. If a young person seeks to establish social contact you should exercise your professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.
- Staff must not develop personal or sexual relationships with pupils/students and should not engage in any sexual activity with a pupil/student. Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts.
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' defines sexual abuse as ... 'forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).
- Staff should be mindful of sections 15A and 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003.

- Staff must not make sexual remarks to a pupil/student, discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils/students or discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in an inappropriate setting or context.
- Contact with children should be through WMS' authorised mechanisms such as school email. Personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via all social media platforms should not be used and staff should not share their home address with pupils/students. If contacted via an inappropriate route the member of staff must inform the Principal/Head of school immediately.
- WMS staff must not accept friend invitations or become friends with any pupil/student of WMS on any social media platform. Staff should also refrain from following the Twitter or other similar social media accounts of pupils/students or their parents. Staff must read the school's e-safety policy carefully and follow all advice and guidance contained within it.

Infatuations

- It is not unusual for pupils or, sometimes, their parents to develop infatuations towards members of staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of those concerned.
- Staff should also be aware that such circumstances carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. Any indications of an infatuation towards yourself or another member of staff must be reported to your line manager.

Gifts/Hospitality

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- Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift/offer of hospitality that might be construed as a bribe by others or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. However, there may be occasions where pupils/students or parents wish to give a small token of appreciation to staff, for example at religious festivities or at the end of the year.
- It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or to suggest to children that gifts are appropriate or desired. Money must not be accepted as a gift. If you are unsure whether to accept a gift you should consult the Principal/Head of School.
- Staff must not accept significant gifts or hospitality from pupils, parents, carers, actual or potential contractors or outside suppliers. All such gifts/offers of hospitality should be reported to the Principal/Head of School and recorded.
- Personal gifts must not be given by staff to children and any reward to children should be in accordance with WMS' behaviour policy, recorded and not based on favouritism.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for

most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with pupils it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

- Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.
- It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.
- Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described. Staff should never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent. Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny. Staff must not engage in rough play, tickling or fun fights with pupils/students.
- Extra caution should be exercised where a child is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a child exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the child through helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.
- Staff supervising PE and games or providing musical tuition should demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument on another member of staff if possible. However, they may be required to initiate physical contact with pupils/students to support a child to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or to assist them with an exercise. Contact under these circumstances should be done with the pupil/student's agreement, for the minimum time necessary and in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil/student.
- Physical contact must never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult or represent a misuse of authority.
- If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the Principal/Head of School, recorded and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the child's file.
- Staff should refer to WMS' Physical Intervention/Positive Handling/ Intimate Care Policies.

One to one situations

- Staff working individually with children should be aware of the potential vulnerability of child and staff in such situations. Staff should manage these situations with regard to the safety of the pupil/student and to themselves.

- Individual work with child should not be undertaken in isolated areas or rooms where there is no external viewing panel. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality a colleague should be made aware of this and asked to remain vigilant.

Transporting pupils

- In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to transport children offsite, for example sports fixtures, swimming lessons or other out of school activities. A designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements and to respond to any difficulties that may arise.
- Staff should ensure that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. Staff should ensure that the driver has the appropriate license for the vehicle, that the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.
- Staff should ensure that the driver is not distracted while the vehicle is in motion for any reason other than an emergency and should also ensure all passengers are wearing correctly fastened seatbelts. Staff should never transport children while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. 12.4 Prior to transporting children offsite consent must be obtained from child's parent/guardian and staff should be aware that the safety and welfare of the children is their responsibility until this is safely passed back to their parent/carer.

Online Safety

- Staff should follow WMS' E-Safety policy.
- Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute. Staff should adopt the highest security settings on any personal profiles they have.
- Staff should remain mindful of their digital tattoo and exercise caution in all their use of social media or any other web-based presence they have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups. Staff should exercise care when using dating websites where staff could encounter students.
- Staff must not make contact with children or ex leavers, must not accept or initiate friend requests nor follow pupil/student or ex pupil accounts on any social media platform. Staff must not communicate with children or ex leavers via social

media, websites, instant messenger accounts or text message. The only acceptable method of contact is via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment.

- Staff should not make contact with pupils' family members, accept or initiate friend requests or follow pupils' family member's account on any social media platform.
- However, WMS acknowledges that staff who are also parents may wish to make contact with other parents, who are friends, over social media. Staff must exercise caution and professional judgement in these circumstances and should not have any contact with pupils' family members via social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- The camera and filming functions of mobile devices must not be used in school, on school trips or on official nursery/school business. 13.8 Mobile phones and personally owned mobile devices brought in to nursery/school are the responsibility of the device owner. WMs accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally owned mobile phones or mobile devices.

Photography, video and images of children

- Many activities involve recording images as part of the curriculum, extra activities, publicity or to celebrate an achievement. In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 the image of a pupil/student is personal data. Therefore, it is a requirement under the Act for consent to be obtained from the parent/guardian of a pupil/student for any images made. It is also important to take into account the wishes of the child, remembering that some children do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed.
- Using images for publicity purposes will require the appropriate consent of the child's parent/guardian. Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without their consent. Staff should also be clear about the purpose of the activity and what will happen to the photographs/images/video footage when the lesson or activity is concluded.
- Photographs/stills or video footage of pupils/students should only be taken using setting equipment for purposes authorised by the school and should be stored securely and only on setting equipment.
- Staff should ensure that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is aware of the proposed use of photographic/video equipment and that this is recorded in lesson plans. All photographs/stills and video footage should be available for scrutiny and staff should be able to justify all images/video footage made.

- Staff should remain aware of the potential for images of child to be misused to create indecent images of children and/or for grooming purposes. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to how activities which are being filmed or photographed are organised and undertaken. Particular care should be given when filming or photographing young or vulnerable child who may be unable to question how or why the activities are taking place. Staff should also be mindful that children who have been abused through the use of video or photography may feel threatened by its use in a teaching environment.

Confidentiality

- Members of staff may have access to confidential information about children, their parents/carers or their siblings. Staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the child on a need-to-know basis.

- Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a child or his/her family for their own, or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child.

- All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a child is bullied by another child, this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the child's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except by a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter.

- Staff have a statutory obligation to share with WMS' Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the welfare or safety of a child or that might suggest a child is in need or at risk of significant harm. Staff should pass on information without delay in accordance with WMS' Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and this should be recorded. Staff must never promise a child that they will not act on or pass on any information that they are told by the child.

- Staff should refer to the Department of Education's 'Updated Guidance – Information Sharing – Advice for Practitioners' providing safeguarding services and further guidance on information sharing. If you are in any doubt about whether to share, you should seek guidance from a member of the senior leadership team.

- Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to the senior leadership team and only approved staff and members should communicate to the media about the setting.

Parents as employees

- It is acknowledged that some staff also have children who attend the setting. It is recognised that in these cases the staff fulfil a dual role of parent and employee.
- Parents as employees should ensure that they uphold boundaries between the two roles and that their behaviour does not constitute a conflict of interest. For example, they must maintain the same level of confidentiality despite social expectations. Parent-staff should discuss any inter-role conflict with their line manager.

Whistleblowing

- Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, without fear of repercussion.
- All staff have a duty to report any behaviour by a colleague which raises concern. Staff should refer to WMS' Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance. This is particularly important when the welfare of a child may be at risk.

Outside Activities and Other Employment

- Staff, volunteers and students are not permitted to engage in any activity outside their employment with the school which could reasonably be interpreted as competing with or conflicting with the school.
- Staff, volunteers and students are required to seek permission from the Principal before taking on any other employment while employed at the school.
- Staff, volunteers and students must take care when using social networking and similar websites that they do not post any material that breaches the school or client confidentiality, or which is libellous, or which can damage the business of the school.

Changes in Personal Details

- Staff, volunteers and students must notify the school of any change in personal details, including change of name, address, telephone number or next of kin. This will help the school to maintain accurate personal details in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, and ensure it is able to contact the employee or another designated person in case of emergency.

Gross Misconduct

Set out below are examples of behaviour the school treats as gross misconduct. Such behaviour may result in dismissal without notice. This list is not exhaustive:

- Theft, dishonesty or fraud.
- Deliberate recording of incorrect working hours.
- Smoking on school premises
- Sleeping during working hours.
- Assault, acts of violence or aggression.
- Bullying.
- Unacceptable use of obscene or abusive language.
- Possession, use of or being under the influence of non-medicinal drugs or alcohol on school premises or during working hours.
- Wilful damage to school, employee or customer property.
- Serious insubordination.
- Bringing the school into disrepute.
- Falsification of records or other school documents, including those relating to obtaining employment.
- Unlawful discrimination, including acts of indecency or harassment (please refer to the Equal Opportunities Policy).
- Refusal to carry out reasonable management instructions.
- Gambling, bribery or corruption.
- Serious breach of Health and Safety policies and procedures.
- Breach confidentiality, including the unauthorised disclosure of school information to the media or any other party.
- Unauthorised accessing or use of computer data.
- Unauthorised copying of computer software.

Compliance

All staff must complete the form in appendix 1 to confirm they have read, understood and agree to comply with this policy. This form should be signed and dated and a copy retained on the member of staff's file

This policy was adopted on dated: 01.03.2016

Date last reviewed: 12th September 2025

Date to be reviewed: 12th September 2026

Appendix 1

Confirmation of compliance:

I hereby confirm that I have read, understood and agree to comply with Walthamstow Montessori School's Code of Conduct policy.

Name ……..

Position/Post Held…….

Signed ……..

Date ……

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to Wendy Palumbo, Head of School.